

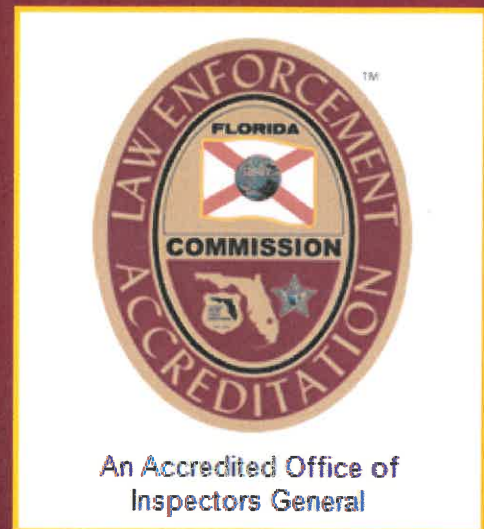
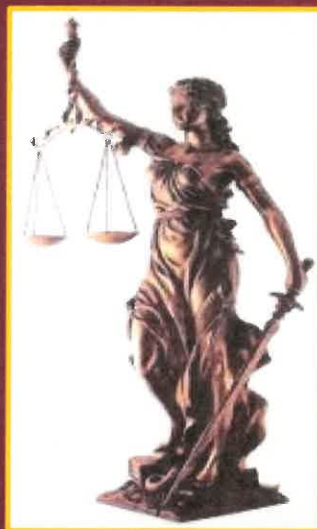
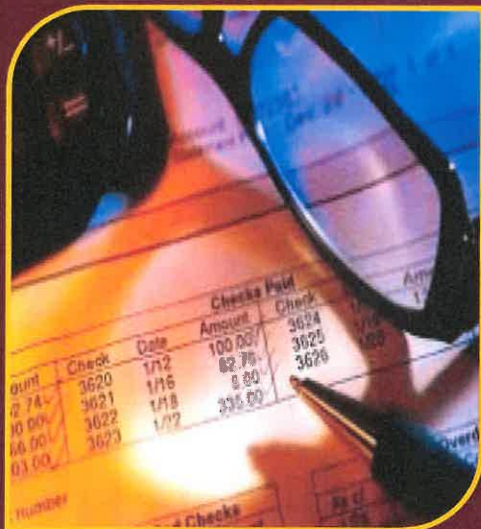
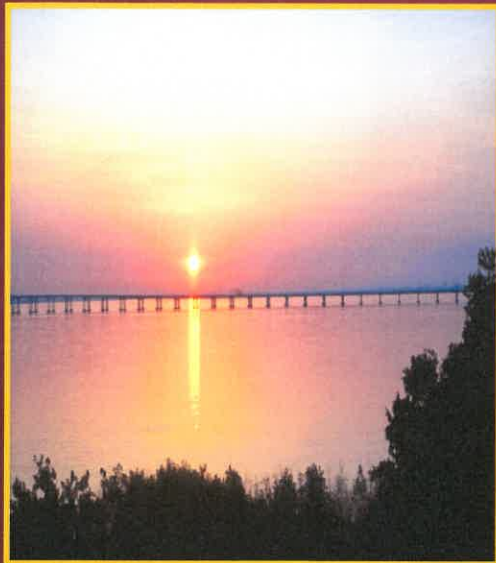


## DIVISION OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

KEN BURKE, CPA

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

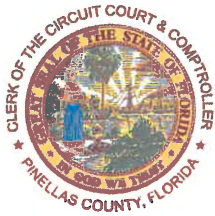
# INVESTIGATION OF FORT DE SOTO PARKING CITATION



**Hector Collazo Jr.**  
Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive

**Investigation Team**  
Melissa Dondero, CPA, CIA, CIGA, CITP, CRMA – Inspector General Manager  
Ava Jurek, CIA, CIGA, CIGI, CCA – Senior Inspector General Auditor

January 8, 2016  
REPORT NO. 2016-02



## Ken Burke, CPA

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Clerk of the County Court  
Recorder of Deeds  
Clerk and Accountant of the Board of County Commissioners  
Custodian of County Funds  
County Auditor

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January 8, 2016

Paul Cozzie, Director, Parks and Conservation Resources  
David Bateman, Director, Court and Operational Services

At the request of Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, the Division of Inspector General Public Integrity Unit has completed an investigation on the following allegations:

1. An officer issued a parking citation at the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area without basis since there was no properly posted signage disallowing trailer parking and no parking restrictions posted in the Fort De Soto Park's brochure and on the website. **Unfounded.**
2. The parking citation issued by the officer does not include instructions to whom the check for parking fines must be made payable to on the citation. **Substantiated.**

To determine whether the allegations were substantiated, we reviewed policies, procedures, and appropriate records. We also interviewed staff and other parties, as needed. Our investigation was performed according to the *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General* and *The Florida Inspectors General Standards Manual* from the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

The recommendations presented in this report may not be all-inclusive of areas where improvement may be needed. We believe that implementation of the recommendations will address the issues and strengthen the current internal controls.

We appreciate the full cooperation and assistance of Parks and Conservation Resources and Court and Operational Services management during our investigation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 464-8371.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hector Collazo Jr.  
Inspector General/Chief Audit Executive

cc: Ken Burke, CPA, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller  
Jeff Gates, Director, Court and Operational Services



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# INTRODUCTION

## Synopsis

The Division of Inspector General investigated the following allegations:

1. An officer issued a parking citation at the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area without basis since there was no properly posted signage disallowing trailer parking and no parking restrictions posted in the Fort De Soto Park's brochure and on the website.
2. The parking citation issued by the officer does not include instructions to whom the check for parking fines must be made payable to on the citation.

The Division of Inspector General investigation of the allegations concluded the following:

1. A large sign disallowing bus, motor home, and trailer parking in the Arrowhead Picnic Area is posted at the parking entrance, see pictures below taken on October 1, 2015. The brochure available at Fort De Soto Park and on the Park and Conservation Resources website clearly states that trailers are prohibited in the Arrowhead Family Picnic Area. We have determined that the allegation is unfounded, as there was sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the allegation is not true. However, adding additional signage within the Arrowhead Picnic Area parking lot is recommended.



2. The parking citation and the attached envelope do not include instructions to whom the check must be made payable. We have determined that the allegation is substantiated, as there was sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the allegation is true.

## Summary of Investigative Findings

NO.	INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS CAPTIONS RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSES	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
1	<b><i>Parking Citations Lack Clear Instructions To Whom The Check Must Be Written.</i></b>		
	We recommend management include instructions on the citation as to whom the check for parking citation fines must be made payable.	Concur	Planned
2	<b><i>There Are No Signs Disallowing Bus, Mobile Home, And Trailer Parking Within The Arrowhead Picnic Area Parking Lot.</i></b>		
	We recommend management consider installing additional signs restricting parking in the Fort De Soto Park Arrowhead Picnic Area parking lot.	Concur	Planned
3	<b><i>The Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area Seawall Is Unsafe For Kayak Launching.</i></b>		
	We recommend management consider prohibiting or posting warning signs in an effort to prevent individuals from launching kayaks off the Fort De Soto Park Arrowhead Picnic Area seawall.	Concur	Planned

## ***Background***



Parks and Conservation Resources (PCR) is a department dedicated to the preservation of Pinellas County's park land, environmentally sensitive land, healthy air, and the history of Pinellas County. The largest park within the Pinellas County park system, Fort De Soto consists of 1,136 acres made up of five interconnected islands (keys). These keys are home to beach plants, mangroves, wetlands, palm hammocks, hardwoods, and scores of native plants. The beach also provides refuge to the loggerhead sea turtles, which nest between April and September. Each of these species plays a vital role in the preservation and protection of the natural environment.

The park property was first purchased from the federal government in 1938 for \$12,500. In 1941, the property was sold back to the federal government for \$18,404 to be used as a gunnery and bombing range during World War II. The property was repurchased by Pinellas County from the United States in 1948 for \$26,500. The 12-inch mortar battery, located at the fort for which the park was named, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

Fort De Soto was named America's Top Beach for 2009 by Trip Advisor, the world's largest online travel community. In 2005, "Dr. Beach" named Fort De Soto the nation's #1 Beach. Annual park attendance averages more than 2.7 million visitors. Amenities at Fort De Soto include:

- Historic fort
- Over 7 miles of waterfront
- 800-foot-long boat launching facility with eleven floating docks
- 238-site family camping area with facilities
- Primitive youth camping area
- 15 picnic shelters
- Restrooms
- Playgrounds
- Paved recreation trails
- Two large swim centers

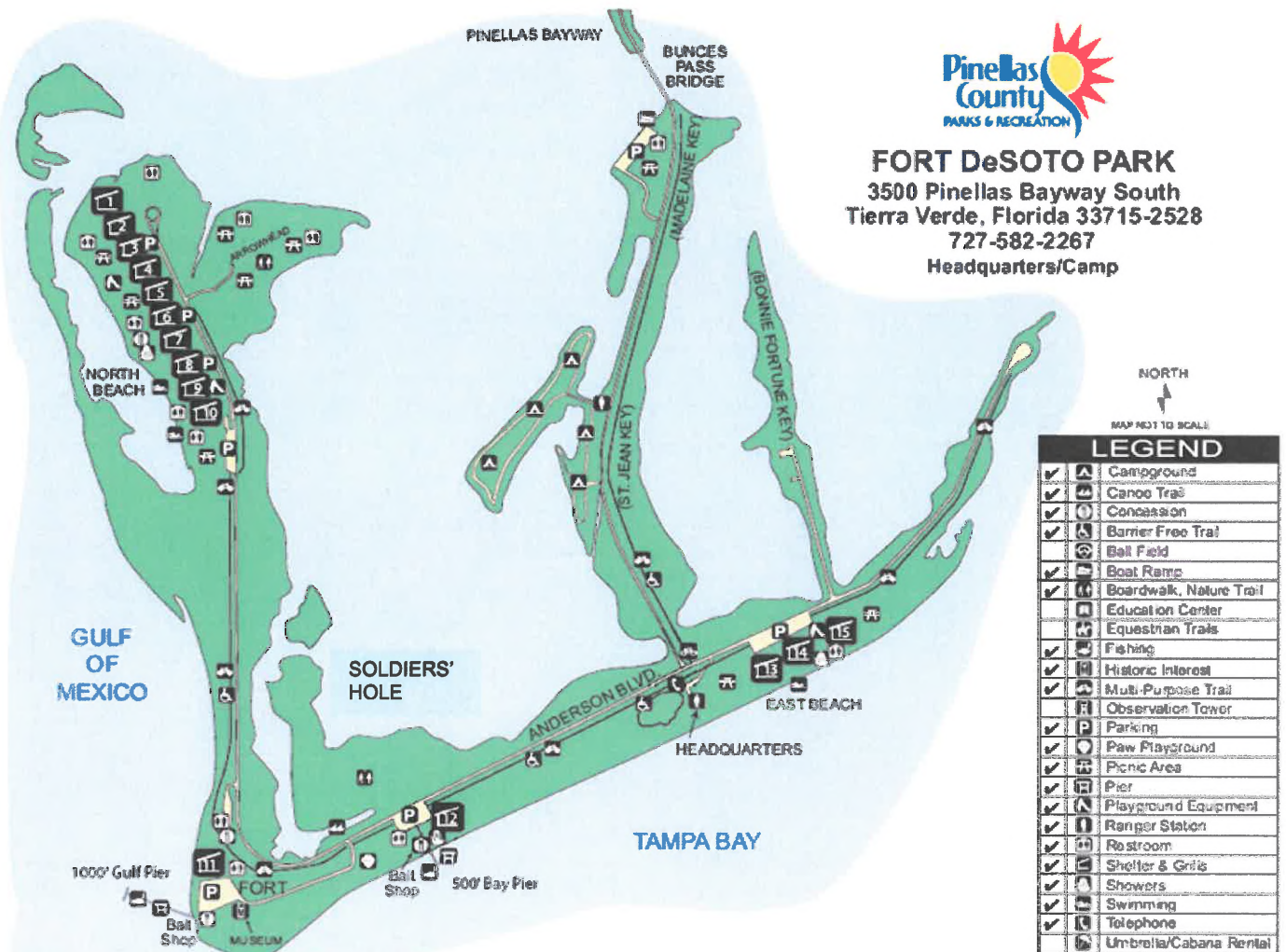


- Lifeguard services
- Two fishing piers
- Ferry service to Egmont Key
- Concession/snack bar/souvenir shop
- Quartermaster Museum
- Recreational canoe trail
- Nature trails
- Dog park

Arrowhead Picnic Area is located in the northern part of Fort De Soto and includes a 1-mile nature trail.



The kayak rental and the kayak trail are located near the Soldiers' Hole along Anderson Boulevard.





On September 30, 2015, Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller forwarded a complaint he received from a citizen to the Division of Inspector General. The complaint pertained to a parking citation the citizen received for improper parking at the Arrowhead Picnic Area at Fort De Soto. The complainant alleged that:

1. An officer issued a parking citation at the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area without basis since there was no properly posted signage disallowing trailer parking and no parking restrictions posted in the Fort De Soto Park's brochure and on the website.
2. The parking citation issued by the officer does not include instructions to whom the check for parking fines must be made payable to on the citation.

The Division of Inspector General investigation of the allegations concluded the following:

1. **Unfounded**. A large sign disallowing bus, motor home, and trailer parking in the Arrowhead Picnic Area is posted at the parking entrance. The brochure available at Fort De Soto Park and on the PCR website clearly states that trailers are prohibited in the Arrowhead Family Picnic Area.
2. **Substantiated**. The parking citation and the attached envelope do not include instructions to whom the check must be made payable.

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# INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

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## ***1. Parking Citations Lack Clear Instructions To Whom The Check Must Be Written.***

Parking citations issued at Fort De Soto do not include instructions to whom the fines are payable. Citizens may be confused as to who is the recipient of parking citation fines, either Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources or the Clerk of Court.

The envelope attached to the citation is addressed to the Clerk of Court. However, the citation includes the following statements:

DO NOT SEND CASH

PINELLAS COUNTY PARKS & CONSERVATION RESOURCES

No other instructions are included. The instructions to whom the check must be payable are not included on the parking citation.

This information may confuse citizens as to whom the check must be made payable. It may cause citizens to call the Clerk of Circuit Court Customer Information Line [(727) 464-7000] listed on the citation to determine who should be the recipient of the check. Parking citations should contain clear instructions as to whom the check for the fine must be made payable.

**We recommend** management include instructions on the citation as to whom the check for parking citation fines must be made payable.

### **Management Response:**

**Concur.** Management concurs as to the parking citation issued by the Parks and Conservation Resources Department. Since the Pinellas County Clerk's Office does not print the parking citations for the issuing agencies, we have contacted Karen Key at Parks and Conservation Resources and advised the agency to include the additional information on whom checks are to be made payable.

In addition, we have contact all of the other municipalities and agencies within Pinellas County and advised each of the need for additional payment information to be included on the parking citations they print and process.

## ***2. There Are No Signs Disallowing Bus, Mobile Home, And Trailer Parking Within The Arrowhead Picnic Area Parking Lot.***

There are no posted signs restricting parking within the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area parking lot. A properly posted and visible sign restricting parking is only posted at the entrance to the Arrowhead Picnic Area parking. Citizens who do not notice the sign at the park entrance may not be aware of the existing parking restrictions. When parking restrictions are in place, a sufficient number of signs containing clear restriction information should be posted in the affected area.

**We recommend** management consider installing additional signs restricting parking in the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area parking lot.

### **Management Response:**

**Concur.** Management agrees with the recommendation.

## ***3. The Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area Seawall Is Unsafe For Kayak Launching.***

The seawall in the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area is covered with a metal sheet which is sharp on the edges. Depending on the tide, there is at least a 3-4 foot drop from the top of the seawall to the water level. In addition, there are numerous sharp, underwater rocks at the bottom right of the seawall. Despite these unfavorable conditions, some individuals choose to launch their kayaks off the seawall.

Conditions of the seawall in the Arrowhead Picnic Area make the area unfavorable for kayak launching. Individuals launching kayaks off the seawall may get injured, which creates a liability for Pinellas County.

Kayaks should be launched from the designated launch areas or areas with easy and safe access to water.

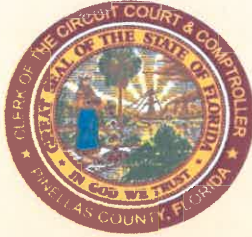


**We recommend** management consider prohibiting or posting warning signs in an effort to prevent individuals from launching kayaks off the Fort De Soto Arrowhead Picnic Area seawall.



**Management Response:**

**Concur.** Management agrees with the recommendation.



# DIVISION OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

KEN BURKE, CPA  
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT  
& COMPTROLLER  
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

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